

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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VIXEN.

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CHAPTER IX. CAPTAIN WINSTANLEY.

Two years later, and Vixen was sitting with the same faithful Argus nestling beside her, by the fireside of a spacious Brighton drawing-room—a large, lofty, commonplace room, with tall windows facing seawards. Miss McCroke was there too, standing at one of the windows taking up a dropped stitch in her knitting, while Mrs. Tempest walked slowly up and down the expanse of Brussels carpet, stopping now and then at a window to look idly out at the red sunset beyond the low-lying roofs and spars of Shoreham. Those two years had changed Violet Tempest from a slender girl to a nobly-formed woman, a woman whom a sculptor would have worshipped as his dream of perfection, whom a painter would have revered for her glow and splendour of colouring, but about whose beauty the common run of mankind, and more especially womankind, had not quite made up their minds. The pretty little women with eighteen-inch waists opined that Miss Tempest was too big.

"She's very handsome, you know, and all that," they said deprecatingly, "and her figure is quite splendid; but she's on such a very large scale. She ought to be painted in fresco, you know, on a high cornice. As Autumn, or Plenty, or Ceres, or something of that kind, carrying a cornucopia. But in a drawing-room she looks so very massive."

The amber-haired women—palpably indebted to auriculous fluids for the colour of their tresses—objected to the dark

burnished gold of Violet Tempest's hair. There was too much red in the gold, they said, and a colour so obviously genuine was very unfashionable. That milk-white skin of hers, too, found objectors, on the score of a slight powdering of freckles; spots which the kindly sun leaves on the fruit he best looks. In fact, there were many reservations made by Miss Tempest's pretended admirers when they summed up her good looks, but when she rode her pretty bay horse along the King's Road, strangers turned to look at her admiringly; when she entered a crowded room she threw all paler beauties in the shade. The cabbage-rose is a vulgar flower perhaps, but she is queen of the garden notwithstanding.

Lest it should be supposed, after this, that Vixen was a giantess, it may be as well to state that her height was five feet six, her waist twenty-two inches at most, her shoulders broad but finely sloping, her arms full and somewhat muscular, her hands not small, but exquisitely tapering, her foot long and narrow, her instep arched like an Arab's, and all her movements instinct with an untutored grace and dignity. She held her head higher than is common to women, and on that score was found guilty of pride.

"I think we ought to go back before Christmas, Violet," said Mrs. Tempest, continuing a discussion that had been dragging itself slowly along for the last half-hour.

"I am ready, mamma," answered Vixen, submissively. "It will break our hearts afresh whenever we go home, but I suppose we must go home some day."

"But you would like to see the dear old house again, surely, Violet?"

"Like to see the frame without the picture? No, no, no, mamma. The frame

was very dear while the picture was in it—but—yes,” cried Vixen passionately, “I should like to go back. I should like to see papa’s grave, and carry fresh flowers there every day. It has been too much neglected.”

“Neglected, Violet! How can you say such things? When Manotti’s bill for the monument was over nine hundred pounds.”

“Oh mamma, there is more love in a bunch of primroses, that my own hand gathers and carries to the grave, than in all the marble or granite in Westminster Abbey.”

“My dear, for poor people wild flowers are very nice, and show good feeling—but the rich must have monuments. There could be nothing too splendid for your dear papa,” added the widow tearfully.

She was always tearful when she spoke of her dear Edward, even now, though she was beginning to find that life had some savour without him.

“No,” said Vixen, “but I think papa will like the flowers best.”

“Then I think, Miss McCroke,” pursued Mrs. Tempest, “we will go back at the end of November. It would be a pity to lose the season here.”

Vixen yawned despondently.

“What do we care about the season, mamma?” she exclaimed. “Can it matter to us whether there are two or three thousand extra people in the place? It only makes the King’s Road a little more uncomfortable.”

“My dear Violet, at your age gaiety is good for you,” said Mrs. Tempest.

“Yes, and, like most other things that are good, it’s very disagreeable,” retorted Vixen.

“And now, about this ball,” pursued Mrs. Tempest, taking up a dropped stitch in the previous argument; “I really think we ought to go, if it were only on Violet’s account. Don’t you, Maria?”

Mrs. Tempest always called her governess Maria when she was anxious to conciliate her.

“Violet is old enough to enter society, certainly,” said Miss McCroke, with some deliberation; “but whether a public ball—”

“If it’s on my account, mamma, pray don’t think of going,” protested Vixen earnestly; “I hate the idea of a ball—I hate—”

“Captain Winstanley,” announced Forbes, in the dusky end of the drawing-room by the door.

“He has saved me the trouble of finishing my sentence,” muttered Vixen.

The visitor came smiling through the dusk, into the friendly glow of the fire. He shook hands with Mrs. Tempest with the air of an old friend, went over to the window to shake hands with Miss McCroke, and then came back to Vixen, who gave him a limp cold hand, with an indifference that was almost insolent, while Argus lifted his head an inch or so from the carpet and saluted him with a suppressed growl. Whether this arose from a wise instinct in the animal, or from a knowledge that his mistress disliked the gentleman, would be too nice a point to decide.

“I was that moment thinking of you, Captain Winstanley,” said the widow.

“An honour and a happiness for me,” murmured the captain.

Mrs. Tempest seated herself in her own particular chair, beside which was her own particular table, with one of those pretty tea services which were her chief delight—a miniature silver tea-kettle with a spirit-lamp, a cosy little ball-shaped teapot, cups and saucers of old Battersea.

“You’ll take a cup of tea?” she said insinuatingly.

“I shall be delighted. I feel as if I ought to go home and write verses, or smart paragraphs for the comic papers after drinking your tea, it is so inspiring. Addison ought to have drunk just such tea before writing one of his Spectators, but unfortunately his muse required old port.”

“If The Spectator came out nowadays I’m afraid we should think it stupid,” suggested Mrs. Tempest.

“Simply because the slipshod writers of the present day have spoiled our taste for fine English,” interjected Miss McCroke severely.

“Well, I fear we should find Addison a little thin,” said Captain Winstanley; “I can’t imagine London society existing for a week on such literary pabulum as The Vision of Mirza. We want something stronger than that. A little scandal about our neighbours, a racy article on field sports, some sharpish hits at the City, and one of Addison’s papers on hoods, or breast-knots, patches or powder, thrown in by way of padding. Our dear Joseph is too purely literary for the present age.”

“What monsters newspapers have grown,” remarked Mrs. Tempest. “It’s almost impossible to get through them.”

“Not if you read anything else,” answered the captain. “The majority do not.”

"We were talking about the ball just as you came in," said Mrs. Tempest. "I really think Vixen ought to go."

"I am sure she ought," said the captain.

Vixen sat looking at the fire and patting Argus. She did not favour the captain with so much as a glance; and yet he was a man upon whom the eyes of women were apt to dwell favourably. He was not essentially handsome. The most attractive men rarely are. He was tall and thin, with a waist as small as a woman's, small hands, small feet—a general delicacy of mould that was accounted thoroughbred. He had a long nose, a darkly pale complexion, keen grey eyes under dark brows, dark hair, cropped close to his small head; thin lips, white teeth, a neat black moustache, and a strictly military appearance, though he had sold out of a crack regiment three years ago, and was now a gentleman at large, doing nothing, and living in a gentleman-like manner on a very small income. He was not in debt, and was altogether respectable. Nothing could be said against him, unless it were some dark hint of a gambling transaction, some vague whisper about the mysterious appearance of a king at écarté—the kind of rumour which is apt to pursue a man who, like Bulwer's Dudley Smooth, always wins.

Despite these vague slanders, which are generally baseless—the mere expression of society's floating malice, the scum of ill-nature on the world's waves—Captain Winstanley was a universal favourite. He went everywhere, and was liked wherever he went. He was very clever, gifted with that adaptability and handiness which is, of all cleverness, most valuable in polite society. Of him, as of Goldsmith, it might be said that he touched nothing he did not adorn. True, that the things he touched were for the most part small things; but they were things that kept him before the eye of society, and found favour in that eye.

He was a good horseman, a good oarsman, a good swimmer, a good cricketer. He played and sang; he was a first-rate amateur actor; he was great at billiards and all games of skill; he could talk any language society wanted him to talk—society not requiring a man to excel in Coptic or Chinese, or calling upon him suddenly for Japanese or Persian; he dressed with perfect taste, and without the slightest pretence of dandyism; he could write a first-rate letter, and caricature his dearest friends of last year in pen and ink for the entertainment of his dearest

friends of this year; he was known to have contributed occasionally to fashionable periodicals, and was supposed to have a reserve of wit and satire which would quite have annihilated the hack writers of the day, had he cared to devote himself to literature.

Mrs. Tempest and her daughter had met the captain early in the previous spring among Swiss mountains. He knew some of Mrs. Tempest's Hampshire friends, and with no other credentials had contrived to win her friendship. Vixen took it into her obstinate young head to detest him. But then, Vixen at seventeen and a half was full of ridiculous dislikes and irrational caprices. Mrs. Tempest, in her lonely and somewhat depressed condition, considered the captain a particularly useful acquaintance. Miss McCroke was dubious, but finding any expression of her doubts ungraciously received, took the safer line of silence.

The ball in question was a charity ball at the Pavilion, a perfectly unobjectionable ball. The list of patronesses bristled with noble names. There was nothing to be said against Vixen's appearance there, except Miss McCroke's objection, that Squire Tempest's daughter and heiress ought not to make her début in society at any public ball whatever. But Mrs. Tempest had set her heart upon Vixen's going to the ball; or, in other words, she had set her heart upon going herself. On her way through Paris in September she had gone to Worth's—out of curiosity, just to see what the great man's salons were like—and there she had been tempted into the purchase of an artistic combination of black silk and jet, velvet and passementerie. She did not require the costume, but the thing in itself was so beautiful that she could not help buying it. And having spent a hundred guineas upon this masterpiece, there arose in her mind a natural craving to exhibit it; to feel that she was being pointed out as one of the best-dressed women in the crowded room; to know that women were whispering to each other significantly, "Worth," as the velvet and silk and passementerie combination swept by them.

There was a good deal more discussion, and it was ultimately settled that Vixen should go to the ball. She had no positive objection. She would have liked the idea of the ball well enough perhaps, if it had not been for Captain Winstanley. It was his advocacy that made the subject odious.

"How very rudely you behaved to Captain Winstanley, Violet," said Mrs. Tempest, when her visitor had departed.

"Did I, mamma?" enquired Vixen, listlessly. "I thought I was extraordinarily civil. If you knew how I should have liked to behave to him you would think so too."

"I cannot imagine why you are so prejudiced against him," pursued Mrs. Tempest fretfully.

"It is not prejudice, mamma, but instinct, like Argus's. That man is destined to do us some great wrong, if we do not escape out of his clutches."

"It is shameful of you to say such things," cried the widow, pale with anger. "What have you to say against him? What fault can you find with him? You cannot deny that he is most gentlemanlike."

"No, mamma; he is a little too gentlemanlike. He makes a trade of his gentlemanliness. He is too highly polished for me."

"You prefer a rough young fellow, like Roderick Vawdrey, who talks slang, and smells of the stables."

"I prefer anyone who is good and true," retorted Vixen. "Roderick is a man, and not to be named in the same breath with your fine gentleman."

"I admit that the comparison would be vastly to his disadvantage," said the widow. "But it's time to dress for dinner."

"And we are to dine with the Mortimers," yawned Vixen. "What a bore!"

This young lady had not that natural bent for society which is symptomatic of her age. The wound that pierced her young heart two years ago had not healed so completely, that she could find pleasure in inane conversation and the factitious liveliness of a fashionable dinner-table.

CHAPTER X. "IT SHALL BE MEASURE FOR MEASURE."

THE night of the ball came, and, in spite of her aversion for Captain Winstanley and general dislike of the whole thing, Violet Tempest began the evening by enjoying herself. She was young and energetic, and had an immense reserve of animal spirits after her two years of sadness and mourning. She danced with the partners her friends brought her—some of the most eligible men in the room—and was full of life and gaiety; yet the festival seemed to her in some wise horrible all the time.

"If papa could know that we are dancing and smiling at each other, as if

all life was made up of gladness, when he is lying in his cold grave!" thought Vixen, after joining hands with her mother in the ladies' chain.

The widow looked as if she had never known a care. She was conscious that Worth's chef-d'œuvre was not thrown away. She saw herself in the great mirrors which once reflected George and his lovely Fitzherbert in their days of gladness—which reflected the same George later, old, and sick, and weary.

"That French grande dame was right," thought Mrs. Tempest, "who said *le noir est si flattant pour les blondes*."

Black was flattering for Vixen's ruddy hair also. Though her indifferent eye rarely glanced at the mirrored walls, she had never looked lovelier. A tall graceful figure, in billowy black tulle, wreathed with white chrysanthemums; a queen-like head, with a red-gold coronal; a throat like an ivory pillar, spanned with a broad black ribbon, fastened with a diamond clasp; diamond stars in her ears, and an arrow belt of diamonds round each white arm.

"How many waltzes have you kept for me?" Captain Winstanley asked presently, coming up to Vixen.

"I have not kept waltzes for anyone," she answered indifferently.

"But surely you were under a promise to keep some for me? I asked you a week ago."

"Did you? I am sure I never promised anything of the kind."

"Here is only one little shabby waltz left," said the captain, looking at her programme. "May I put my name down for that?"

"If you like," answered Vixen indifferently; and then, with the faintest suspicion of malice, added, "as mamma does not dance round dances."

She was standing up for the Lancers presently, and her partner had just led her to her place, when she saw that she had her mother and Captain Winstanley again for her vis-à-vis. She grew suddenly pale, and turned away.

"Will you let me sit this out?" she said. "I feel awfully ill."

Her partner was full of concern, and carried her off at once to a cooler room.

"It is too bad!" she muttered to herself. "The Lancers! To go romping round with a lot of wild young men and women. It is as bad as the Queen in Hamlet."

This was the last dance before supper. She went in presently with her attentive partner, who had kept by her side devotedly

while the lively scramble to good old English tunes was going on in the dancing-room.

"Are you better?" he asked tenderly, fanning her with her big black fan, painted with pale-grey cupids and white chrysanthemums. "The room is abominably hot."

"Thanks. I'm quite well now. It was only a momentary faintness. But I rather hate the Lancers, don't you?"

"Well, I don't know. I think, sometimes, you know, with a nice partner, they're good fun. Only one can't help treading on the ladies' trains, and they wind themselves round one's legs like snakes. I've seen fellows come awful croppers, and the lady who has done it look so sweetly unconcerned. But if one tears a lace flounce, you know, they look daggers. It's something too dreadful to feel oneself walking into honiton at ten guineas a yard, and the more one tries to extricate oneself the more harm one does."

Vixen's supper was the merest pretence. Her mother sat opposite her, with Captain Winstanley still in attendance. Vixen gave them one look, and then sat like an image of scorn. Her partner could not get a word from her, and when he offered her the fringed end of a cracker bonbon, she positively refused to have anything to do with it.

"Please don't," she said. "It's too inane. I couldn't possibly pretend to be interested in the motto."

When she went back to the ball-room Captain Winstanley followed her and claimed his waltz. The band was just striking up the latest love-sick German melody, "Weit von dir!" a strain of drawing tenderness.

"You had better go and secure your supper," said Vixen, coldly.

"I despise all ball-suppers. This one most particularly, if it were to deprive me of my waltz."

Vixen shrugged her shoulders, and submitted to take those few preliminary steps which are like the strong swimmer's shiverings on the bank ere he plunges in the stream. And then she was whirling round to the legato strains, "Weit von dir! Weit von dir! Wo ist mein Leben's Lust?—Weit von dir—weit von dir!"

Captain Winstanley's waltzing was simple perfection. It was not the Liverpool Lurch, or the Scarborough Scramble, the Bermondsey Bounce, or the Whitechapel Woggle; it was waltzing pure and simple, unaffected, graceful; the waltzing of a

man with a musical ear, and an athlete's mastery of the art of motion. Vixen hated the captain, but she enjoyed the waltz. They danced till the last bar died away in a tender diminuendo.

"You look pale," said the captain, "let us go into the garden." He brought her cloak and wrapped it round her, and she took his offered arm without a word. It was one of those rare nights in late October, when the wind is not cold. There was hardly the flutter of a leaf in the Pavilion garden. The neighbouring sea made the gentlest music—a melancholy ebb and flow of sound, like the murmuring of some great imprisoned spirit.

In the searching light of day, when its adjacent cab-stands and commonnesses are visible, and its gravelled walks are peopled with nursemaids and small children, the Pavilion garden can hardly be called romantic. But by this tender moonlight, in this cool stillness of a placid autumn midnight, even the Pavilion garden had its air of romance and mystery. And, after all, this part of Brighton has a peculiar charm which all the rest of Brighton lacks. It speaks of the past, it tells its story of the dead. They were not great or heroic, perhaps, those departed figures, whose ghosts haunt us in the red and yellow rooms, and in the stiff town garden; but they had their histories. They lived, and loved, and suffered; and, being dead so long, come back to us in the softened light of vanished days, and take hold of our fancy with their quaint garments and antique head-gear, their powder, and court-swords, and diamond shoe-buckles, and little loves and little sorrows.

Vixen walked slowly along the shining gravel-path, with her black and gold mantle folded round her, looking altogether statuesque and unapproachable. They took one turn in absolute silence, and then Captain Winstanley, who was not inclined to beat about the bush when he had something particular to say, and a good opportunity for saying it, broke the spell.

This was perhaps the first time, in an acquaintance of more than six months, that he had ever found himself alone with Violet Tempest, without hazard of immediate interruption.

"Miss Tempest," he began, with a firmness of tone that startled her, "I want to know why you are so unkind to me?"

"I hardly know what you mean by unkindness. I hope I have never said anything uncivil?"

"No; but you have let me see very plainly that you dislike me."

"I am sorry nature has given me an unpleasantly candid disposition."

Those keen grey eyes of the captain's were watching her intently. An angry look shot at her from under the straight dark brows—swift as an arrow.

"You admit then that you do not like me?" he said.

Vixen paused before replying. The position was embarrassing.

"I suppose if I were ladylike and proper, I should protest that I like you immensely; that there is no one in the world, my mother excepted, whom I like better. But I never was particularly proper or polite, Captain Winstanley, and I must confess there are very few people I do like, and——"

"And I am not one of them," said the captain.

"You have finished my sentence for me."

"That is hard upon me—no, Violet, you can never know how hard. Why should you dislike me? You are the first woman who ever told me so" (flushing with an indignant recollection of all his victories). "I have done nothing to offend you. I have not been obtrusive. I have worshipped at a distance—but the Persian's homage of the sun is not more reverent——"

"Oh, pray don't talk about the Persians and the sun," cried Violet. "I am not worthy that you should be so concerned about my likes and dislikes. Please think of me as an untaught, inexperienced girl. Two years ago I was a spoiled child. You don't know how my dearest father spoiled me. It is no wonder I am rude. Remember this, and forgive me if I am too truthful."

"You are all that is lovely," he exclaimed passionately, stung by her scorn and fired by her beauty, almost beside himself as they stood there in the magical moonlight—for once in his life forgetting to calculate every move on life's chessboard beforehand. "You are too lovely for me. From the very first, in Switzerland, when I was so happy—no, I will not tell you. I will not lay down my heart to be trampled under your feet."

"Don't," cried Vixen, transfixing him with the angry fire of her eyes, "for I'm afraid I should trample on it. I am not one of those gentle creatures who go out of their way to avoid treading on worms—or other reptiles."

"You are as cruel as you are lovely," he said, "and your cruelty is sweeter than another woman's kindness. Violet, I laugh at your dislike. Yes, such aversion as that is often the beginning of closest liking. I will not be disheartened. I will not be put off by your scornful candour. What if I were to tell you that you are the only woman I ever loved?"

"Pray do not. It would transform passive dislike into active hatred. I should be sorry for that, because," looking at him deliberately, with a slow scorn, "I think mamma likes you."

"She has honoured me with her confidence, and I hope I shall not prove unworthy of the trust. I rarely fail to repay any benefit that is bestowed upon me."

"October nights are treacherous," said Vixen, drawing her cloak closer round her. "I think we had better go back to the ball-room."

She was shivering a little with agitated feeling, in spite of that mantle of scorn in which she had wrapped herself. This was the first man who had ever called her lovely, who had ever talked to her of love with manhood's strong passion.

The captain gave her his arm, and they went back to the light and heat of the yellow dragons and scarlet griffins. Another Lancer scramble was in full progress, to the old-fashioned jigging tunes, but Mrs. Tempest was sitting among the matrons in a corner by an open window.

"Are we ever going home any more, mamma?" enquired Vixen.

"My dear Violet, I have been waiting for you ever so long."

"Why should you leave so early?" exclaimed Captain Winstanley. "There are half-a-dozen more dances, and you are engaged for them all, I believe, Miss Tempest."

"Then I will show mercy to my partners by going away," said Violet. "Are all balls as long as this? We seem to have been here ages; I expect to find my hair grey to-morrow morning."

"I really think we had better go," said Mrs. Tempest, in her undecided way.

She was a person who never quite made up her mind about anything, but balanced every question gently, letting somebody else turn the scale for her—her maid, her governess, her daughter; she was always trying to have her own way, but never quite knew what her own way was, and just managed things skilfully enough to prevent other people having theirs.

"If you are determined, I will see you to your carriage, and then the ball is over for me," said the captain gallantly.

He offered Mrs. Tempest his arm, and they went out into the vestibule, where the captain left them for a few minutes, while he went into the porch to hasten the arrival of the carriage.

"Where were you and Captain Winstanley all that time, Violet?" asked Mrs. Tempest.

"In the garden."

"How imprudent!"

"Indeed, dear mamma, it wasn't cold."

"But you were out there so long. What could you find to talk about all that time?"

"We were not talking all the time, only enjoying the cool air and the moonlight."

"Mrs. Tempest's carriage!" roared one of the door-keepers, as if it had been his doing that the carriage had appeared so quickly.

Captain Winstanley was ready to hand them to their brougham.

"Come and take a cup of tea to-morrow afternoon, and let us talk over the ball," said the widow.

"With infinite pleasure."

"Shall we drop you at your house?"

"A thousand thanks—no—my lodgings are so close, I'll walk home."

He went back for his overcoat, and then walked slowly away, without another glance at the crowded ball-room, or the corridors where ladies who were waiting for their carriages were contriving to improve the time by a good deal of quiet, or noisy, flirtation. His lodgings were on the Old Steine, close by. But he did not go home immediately. There are times in a man's life when four walls are too small to hold the bigness of his thoughts. Captain Winstanley paced the Marine Parade for half-an-hour or so before he went home.

"Va pour la mère," he said to himself, at the close of that half-hour's meditations; "she is really very nice, and the position altogether advantageous, perhaps as much as one has the right to expect in the general decadence of things. But, good heavens, how lovely that girl is! She is the first woman who ever looked me in the face and told me she disliked me; the first woman who ever gave me contemptuous looks and scornful words. And yet—for that very reason perhaps—I—"

The dark brows contracted over the keen eyes, which seemed closer than usual to the hawk nose.

"Look to yourself, my queen, in the time

to come," he said, as he turned his back on the silvery sea and moonlight sky. "You have been hard to me and I will be hard to you. It shall be measure for measure."

SOPHIE VON LA ROCHE.

DURING the last fifty years a curious change has come over the position of literary women in Germany. At the beginning of the century clever women were the order of the day, as well in Berlin as in Paris or in London. It was expected of a lady of position that she should not only converse well, but also write letters, poems, or at least acrostics. The typical "hausfrau" emerged for an interval from culinary regions, and appeared at "aesthetic teas" and dramatic readings. But after the passing enthusiasm of the French Revolution and of the Liberation Wars, she took fright at her own temerity, and retired into an obscurity still deeper than before. Hence the anomaly, that while the German men have taken great strides forward, their women are still standing in the kitchen, whisking eggs and shredding cabbage. Custom is the tyrant before whom the German woman bows; though it cost her life, she must keep to what is "die Mode." It has become a point of custom and etiquette in Germany that a woman should not write. In the Recollections of a German woman who determined that she would write (Fanny Lewald) we may read the difficulties and troubles which in consequence beset her. A comparison between her life and that of Sophie von La Roche would be a very curious study, and possibly might throw some light upon what appears to us a dark and subtle problem.

The literary heroine of a century ago found perfect harmony between her life and work, and was, from her childhood, surrounded by culture and by adulation. The family of Von Gutermann held its place among the aristocracy of Augsburg; the eldest daughter, Sophie, was born on December 6, 1731, and passed her early years in a rare atmosphere of refinement and learning. When she was about fourteen, a young Italian physician named Bianconi settled in the town, and became a frequent visitor. He interested himself in Sophie's studies, teaching her Italian and Greek, and studying with her not only the poetry of his native country, but also its history, antiquities, and art. Bianconi also

insisted on the careful cultivation of her voice, and superintended her singing lessons. Sophie, by her brilliant achievements, amply repaid all the care thus lavished upon her, and, as tutor, Bianconi might well be satisfied. But he, after awhile, changed his attitude to that of a lover, and was no longer content with gratitude. At seventeen Sophie became formally engaged to Bianconi, but owing to the sudden death of her mother, the marriage was indefinitely postponed. Bianconi took Von Gutermann with him on a journey into Italy, and was absent for some months. Upon his return he received the appointment of court physician to the Elector of Saxony, and urged that arrangements should at once be made for the wedding. The usual business details had to be entered into, and Bianconi, as a Catholic, expressed the wish that the religious education of his daughters, as well as sons, should be in that faith. Von Gutermann offered vigorous opposition; he was a good Protestant, and, beyond that, a man obstinately tenacious of his own views. Finding that Bianconi did not at once yield, he declared the engagement at an end. Summoning Sophie to his presence, in a stormy scene he bade her give up Bianconi. Her mother was no longer there to mediate or to advise. Sophie, though passionately devoted to Bianconi, resisted all his entreaties for a private marriage, and submitted to her father's decree. From that day, with a fanaticism of love, she sacrificed every pursuit which she had followed with Bianconi; henceforth no one should delight in her voice or her many gifts; her learning and accomplishments became a forgotten legend.

Sophie continued to take charge of her father's house, and of the younger children, until her obedient self-denial received its reward in the arrival of a stepmother. Leaving the house in which she had now become superfluous, Sophie went to Biberach, and spent some months in the house of Pastor Wieland. Hither came, after his first term at Erfurt, the pastor's only son, Christoph Martin Wieland. We think of the portraits of the poet, with his huge wig, his pock-marked face, his small grey eyes, and cannot readily imagine how different he appeared to Sophie: enthusiastic, humorous, genial, sentimental—just seventeen. He attended her in her country walks, shed tears with her over Klopstock's "Messiah," and fell despe-

ately in love. Sophie, not at all averse to adoration, and pleased by the vivacity, frankness, and intellectual promise of the youth, allowed matters to drift on and on, till she found herself engaged to him, with the warm approval of his parents.

During one memorable evening walk, Wieland spoke with strong feeling about the dignity and destiny of the human soul; with tears of sympathy Sophie entreated him to write down the thoughts which he had expressed. The result was a didactic poem, which he presented to her, entitled, "The essence of things; or, the most perfect world." Sophie henceforth prided herself on the first discovery that her lover was a poet. But the stern realities of actual life broke in upon this country idyll. Sophie was peremptorily recalled home from an entanglement with a nameless, penniless student. She found it impossible to accommodate herself to the new conditions at home, or to accept offers of marriage which her father pressed upon her. Returning again to Biberach, change awaited her there also. Wieland's mother had become jealous of his devotion to Sophie, and her attachment had turned into dislike. Wieland himself spent only a few days at the parsonage on his way to Zurich to visit Bodmer. From thence his letters came at rare intervals. Sophie, with creditable spirit, wrote to release the erratic youth from an engagement which appeared to have become a burden, and returned to Augsburg. The parental cry still was, "You must marry." When, therefore, Herr von La Roche, a clever, cultivated man of the world, eligible in all respects, sought the hand of Sophie, he was passively accepted by her. Von Gutermann thought it advisable to ignore his Catholicism, and this time the marriage settlements were signed without any arrangements concerning the souls of his prospective grandchildren. Sophie revealed to La Roche her past heartaches; and although she could not give him passionate love, he expressed, twenty years later, his entire satisfaction in her unchanging and considerate regard.

In the meantime, Wieland had been wandering about Switzerland, and Sophie's letter of renunciation only reached him at the same time with the news of her marriage. He dashed her portrait to the ground, and indulged in much poetic frenzy. When he had picked up the pieces and recovered his temper, he penned to her a long and gushing epistle, expressing his

strong desire to become acquainted with Herr von La Roche. The latter replied in courtly terms of interest in the man who so admired his Sophie. Wieland's lengthy answer is quite a curiosity of character and of manners.

Von La Roche was much occupied in Electoral affairs at Mayence, and had, moreover, the charge of large estates belonging to Count Stadion. A suite of rooms in the house of the count was placed at Sophie's disposal, and, for several years after her marriage, she had the advantage of dining daily in company with a brilliant circle of men, distinguished by every variety of attainment. She also availed herself of her husband's knowledge of English, and of the library, which he had taken with him from London. In 1762, Count Stadion retired to his estate of Warthausen, not far from Biberach, where Von La Roche and his wife remained with him until his death in 1768. By his will he appointed Von La Roche to the magistracy of Bönigheim, which brought to Sophie a life of comparative solitude. She was also obliged to send her three children away for their education. Thus entirely alone, she fell into a pensive mood, which expressed itself partly in letters to friends, and partly in the imaginary history of *Fraülein von Sternheim*. When the adventures, tears, rhapsodies of this young lady came to an end, Sophie forwarded the manuscript to her still faithful correspondent, Wieland. He saw it through the press, and published it, with a eulogistic preface. The story is well written, after the stilted manner of the day, mostly in letters; the incidents are few, the tears, embraces, ecstasies, very many. Throughout are reminiscences of Rousseau, Richardson, Fielding, "Evelina," which make it difficult for the English reader to appreciate any little originality which may characterise it. Goethe reviewed the book in *The Literary Advertiser* in 1772, and it went through nine editions.

The rise of Sophie's literary fame is contemporaneous with the appointment of Von La Roche as chancellor, and their removal to Ehrenbreitstein. They occupied a large cheerful house, which was further enlivened by many visitors and by the presence of their two daughters. The spring of the year 1771 was made memorable throughout Germany by its exceeding beauty. Herder, Gleim, the brothers Jacobi, stayed at Ehrenbreitstein, and wandered in delight through the beech woods which clothe the

hills and valleys running inland from the Rhine; where unceasingly the nightingales kept up their jubilant song; the lilies, hiding under grass and bush, made the air heavy with their fragrance; and the big May-beetles blundered importunately around; while the distant villages, red-roofed and blossom-strewn, looked like nosegays dropped by some aerial passer-by. Into this little paradise came Wieland also. F. H. Jacobi describes the extraordinary scene of his arrival, and in order fully to appreciate it, we must glance at his life during the past ten years. We left him talking philosophy and criticism with Bodmer, and flirting with the Zurich ladies. He was introduced at Berne to Mademoiselle Julie Bönndeli, the Swiss Aspasia, and the friend of Rousseau. Julie, at the first interview, was struck by the naïve self-conceit of the young man. She summoned all her learning and vivacity to set him down. Wieland, under the new and irritating sensation of having appeared at a disadvantage, spoke of her as a terrible woman who bored him for two hours, during which she talked of Plato, Pliny, Cicero, Leibnitz, Pfaff, Aristotle, Locke, triangles, right angles, parallelograms, and so forth. "There is not a girl in the Oberland I should not prefer to this learned Bönndeli—hurrah for the stupid women!" Nevertheless two more visits completed the enslavement of the versatile genius. "Tell me," said Julie, looking him through and through with her keen eyes, "will it be possible for you ever to love anyone else but me?"

Wieland at first protested that it would be impossible, but with his usual naïveté, added, that if ever he met with a woman more beautiful (Julie was not handsome) than herself, entirely virtuous, and entirely unhappy—such a momentary aberration might occur.

"Oh," replied Julie brightly, "if that be all, I can have no objection."

But from that hour she renounced Wieland in her heart, and after a few months' sentimental correspondence, renounced him practically. Wieland left Berne to accept a small office at Biberach. Here the image of his "divine Sophie" haunted his imagination. He knew Warthausen was close at hand; timidly he wrote for permission to come. Wieland was welcomed by Von La Roche and his wife and children. Thenceforth the Castle of Warthausen became to him a Parnassus.

The break with the learned Julie had

been precipitated by Wieland's devotion to Cateau, the handsome sister of Frau von La Roche. She was unhappily married to Hiller, a man of rough, intemperate habits, who showed Wieland the door in no gentle fashion. Cateau became a widow; Wieland characteristically went to her at once with muffled congratulations. An outburst of grief, and a passionate eulogy on the departed, caused Wieland to retreat discomfited. But he returned to the charge, and for the second time saw the outside of the door, in no amiable mood. Finally he married, in 1765, a very plain girl, who made an excellent housekeeper and mother, but whom none of his friends could endure. After these varied experiences, Wieland is to arrive at Ehrenbreitstein. F. H. Jacobi writes:

"Shortly after we heard a carriage drive up; we looked out of the window; it was he himself. Herr von La Roche ran down the stairs to receive him; I impatiently followed; we received our friend in the doorway. Wieland was moved—almost overcome. While we received him, Frau von La Roche had also descended. Wieland had already asked for her with impatience; suddenly he perceived her. I saw him distinctly start back. Then he turned half round with tremulous vehemence, threw away his hat, and staggered forward to Sophie. All this was accompanied by such strange expression in Wieland's whole person and manner, that I was much affected by it. Sophie came with outspread arms toward her friend, but he seized both her hands, and bent over, concealing his face in them. Sophie, with a heavenly grace, leant towards him, and said, in a tone which no Clairon, no Dubois could ever imitate: 'Wieland—Wieland—oh yes, you are still, always my own Wieland.' Wieland, roused by this touching voice, lifted up his head a little, and gazed into the weeping eyes of his friend, then dropped it slowly upon her arm. None present could restrain their tears; mine flowed down my cheeks, and I sobbed aloud; I was so moved and excited, that to this day I know not how the scene ended, and we all again reached the drawing-room."

This touching picture from real life throws some light upon the performances of Fraulein von Sternheim, and other heroines of the epoch of sensibility. We must not charge the novel-writers of that day with exaggeration; people really did make themselves as ridiculous as they

appear in the writings of Wieland, Lafontaine, and Sophie von La Roche. But the latter never lost her self-control, emotion never prevented calculation, every depth of grief or of despair had to be effectively posed.

It was in the following year, 1772, that Goethe visited the La Roche family. In his *Truth and Fiction*, he recounts his passing attachment to Maximiliane, the eldest daughter. Frau von La Roche had had some experience in poets' fancies. After the departure of Goethe she arranged for the bright and charming girl a marriage of the most prosaic kind. The winter saw the young bride established in a business street in Frankfurt, the wife of Peter Brentano, and stepmother to his five children. Among her earliest visitors were Goethe and his mother, through whose introductions in Frankfurt Maximiliane was able somewhat to vary the dull society of her husband's friends. Peter Brentano was a stingy and exacting man, who devoted body and soul to the absorbing object of gain. In spite of outward opulence, Maximiliane's life was a sadly burdened one, and to Goethe the sight of it became so intolerable that he ceased to visit the house. When, a year or two later, Frau von La Roche married her second daughter upon the same worldly principle, Goethe's mother wrote an indignant account of it to the Princess Amelia, ending thus: "If I can make anything out of this whole affair, may I become an oyster; how can a woman like Frau von La Roche, with more than an average intellect, having wealth, rank, position, and so forth, go out of her way to make both her daughters unhappy, and be all the while writing her '*Sternheims*' and her letters of advice to women!"

Sophie continued her literary activities in Jacobi's *Ibis*, from which periodical a selection was published called *Rosalie's Letters*. They show the great toleration exhibited in that day toward all epistolary effort. In Wieland's *New German Mercury* she wrote several tales, and edited a periodical called *Pomona*, which was devoted mainly to the subject of education. One volume was issued with a portrait of the editor. As that is beyond our reach, let us look at the pen-and-ink sketch which Goethe left on record:

"She was the most wonderful woman, and I know none whom I could compare with her. Tall and slight in figure, she knew how to preserve even to her latest years a certain grace of form, as well as of

manner, which alternated charmingly between the aristocratic bearing of a noble lady and the simple dignity of a citizen wife. She maintained throughout many years a uniform style of dress. The small head, with its delicate features, was surmounted by a simple cap with long wings, and the brown or grey dress gave to her presence a sense of dignity and repose. She spoke well, and always knew how, by earnestness, to give weight to what she said. Her manner was precisely the same to everybody. Yet all this does not explain that great peculiarity of her character which it is so extremely difficult to define. Although she appeared to be in sympathy everywhere, nothing ever seemed to influence her own nature. She was always gentle, and apparently able to bear, without suffering, whatever might befall her. She accepted and returned with the same equanimity the jests of her husband, the tenderness of her friends, the attractions of her children, and never appeared affected by the good or evil that was in the world, or by the feeble or the excellent in literature. This habit of mind she owed to her self-reliance, which, through many sad events, she retained to a great age" (*Dichtung und Wahrheit*, vol. ii. p. 146).

The outward position of Herr von La Roche had in the meantime undergone a change. He had published a pamphlet full of sarcasm against the monastic orders, thus widening the breach already existing between himself and the Catholic Electoral Court. With the object of further injuring the position of the Chancellor, a sequel was published still more objectionable than the pamphlet itself. Although the name of its writer transpired, this was nevertheless made the ground of the Chancellor's removal from office. La Roche retired on his philosophy and his small pension to a quiet spot near Mannheim. But his wife's fame brought many visitors, and also invitations, which she accepted on all hands, and became the fêted celebrity of the neighbouring towns. The young ladies who read Pomona trooped everywhere to meet her, and offer gushing expressions of undying obligation and regard.

In 1786 Frau von La Roche visited Paris, where she made the acquaintance of Madame de Genlis and various people of note. Crossing the Channel, she spent a few weeks in London, but hardly appears to have been fortunate in her introductions. The first sight she saw

was Bedlam; the first dinner-party she attended was at the house of Cagliostro, with the notorious Lord George Gordon as chief guest. Madame La Fite, reader to Queen Charlotte, invited her to Windsor; the German and the French authoresses, who had never met before, welcomed each other with such expressions of devoted enthusiasm, that Miss Burney imagined them to have been life-long friends. Turning to Miss Burney, Frau von La Roche exclaimed amid tearful embraces: "Miss Borni! L'auteur de Cécile? D'Evelina? Non, ce n'est pas possible! Suis-je si heureuse? Oui, je le vois à ses yeux! Ah, que de bonheur," &c. Miss Burney also describes with quiet humour a second scene in which Madame La Fite enquires of Sophie concerning her past history, saying, "Ma chère amie, contez-nous un peu." Sophie hesitates, then gazing sentimentally into her fan, recounts the idyllic love affair and subsequent life-long correspondence with the poet Wieland. At the close of it she rose, and fixing her eyes, filled with tears, upon Miss Burney's face, holding both her hands, she exclaimed in melting accents, "Miss Borni, la plus chère, la plus digne des Angloises! dites-moi—m'aimez-vous?" Miss Burney complains penitentially of her own hardness of heart in being unable to produce a single tear upon this touching occasion. "Madame La Roche," she writes, "had I met her in any other way, might have pleased me in no common degree. She is now bien passée—no doubt fifty—has a voice of touching sweetness, eyes of dove-like gentleness, looks supplicating favour, and an air and demeanour the most tenderly caressing. I can suppose she has thought herself all her life the model of the favourite heroine of her own favourite romance."*

After the death of Herr von La Roche, 1788, Sophie spent the remaining years of her life mostly at Offenbach, near to Frankfurt. She published the sentimental history of "Miss Lony," and continued to write industriously. Such effort became increasingly needful, as the political disturbances of the country affected her slender income. Maximiliane Brentano died in 1793, and of her numerous family three daughters were sent to Offenbach, that their accomplished grandmother might finish their education. Among

* *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay*, vol. iii. p. 137.

them was Bettine, who has given us charming glimpses of this poetic home in her Correspondence, and especially in that delightful volume *Der Frühlingskranz*, which contains early letters between herself and her brother, Clemens Brentano. The latter was in high favour at Offenbach, despite his many freaks of imagination and of behaviour. "Child of my Max," the old lady would exclaim, "whence is it you get all this wonderful nonsense?" Bettine had more veneration for her grandmother than for anyone else. She admired her dignity, her self-restraint, her rigid order, all probably by force of contrast; she loved the large well-shaded garden where nothing was out of place, which in spring was strewn and scented with the flakes of acacia blossom, and in autumn was coloured by the purple fruit and reddening leaves of luxuriant vines, which seemed pervaded always with poetry and repose.

The faithful Sophie made one last pilgrimage; it was to Weimar, once more to behold "her own Wieland." From all accounts of this visit we should infer that she would have done well to remain at home. Wieland lived intensely in the present, Sophie still sentimentally in the past; she disapproved of all his later writings, and attributed his degeneracy to the loss of her personal influence. With a little tact these differences which time had wrought might have been smoothed over, but Sophie had no tact. This great failing, resulting as it did from her inability to read character, and so accommodate herself to others, had become more apparent in her later years, and it disturbed in various ways the harmony of her Weimar visit. Many old admirers changed their tone about her, but the cynical Merck could still kindle into enthusiasm and write: "She is the embodiment of womanly grace and refinement, and were I half way across the Elysian fields one sign from her would call me back."

As Sophie von La Roche entered her seventy-sixth year, her health began to fail, and after a brief illness she died on February 18th, 1807. In many German periodicals appeared appreciative notices of her life and work. It is extremely difficult for us fairly to estimate the value of her writings, and to account for the sensation which they produced in their day. We must remember that when she began to write there existed no German literature of the lighter kind. If we put

aside the works of Lessing and of Herder, one critical word is all-sufficing for the rest—"dull, duller, dullest." Her stories, therefore, were welcomed with delight. We should remember also that education was the topic of the day, especially among the Swiss savants; she studied their theories, caught their tone, and wrote for women, not only what mainly established her own fame, but served them far better than did the sighs and tears of her mournful heroines. Had Sophie von La Roche been less artificial, had she ever been content to leave off posing, she might have ranked as an entirely agreeable woman; could she have written naturally, as she talked, her fame as a novelist might have been preserved. Her talent remains indisputable, but she was wholly deficient in naturalness—in that spontaneous power, that bubbling life and humour which have given immortality to the rival she so much admired, the "digne Miss Borni."

UNDER THE BOARD.

I AM a teacher "under the Board"—the Board par excellence—the School Board for London. I am of full official rank, trained and certificated. I may fairly claim to be experienced too, seeing that I have a dozen good reports endorsed upon my parchment by various of her majesty's inspectors; and I hold the same round number of "advanced" science certificates. I am head-teacher of a department of a large and successful school, and altogether am quite entitled to class myself as in the front rank of the profession; and I gladly record that I have shared in that material improvement of position that has accrued to all ranks of the profession, as a necessary result of the widely-extended demand for teaching power, to which the energetic action of the School Boards throughout the country gave rise.

All this I premise, not in the way of trumpet-blowing, but to show that personally I have every reason to be, as I am, well content; and that therefore, in anything I may have to say in the way of fault-finding, I am in no way actuated by a spirit of private grievance-mongering. Moreover, what I have just said as to my personal position and qualifications will bear illustratively upon a question that, now that thousands of elementary teachers are paid out of rate-raised funds, affects

the general public as well as teachers, and those who administer the "wage-fund" from which they are paid. A section of the Board, many of those who are or have been interested in the work of voluntary schools, and a still larger number of uneducated and half-educated people, who know nothing of the qualifications nowadays demanded from a teacher, and hold that his "proper place" is in the "following" of the clergyman of the parish, and that he ought to consider himself passing rich on forty pounds a year, "with house and coals in," and be ready on occasion to take a turn at grave-digging, or bell-ringing, or even, if need be, do a little in the way of boot and knife cleaning—all these go to make up a party whose "cry" is, that the Board pay their teachers too highly. And this they maintain not merely on grounds of general economy and unfair competition with voluntary schools, but also on the ground that salaries ranging up to the wildly-extravagant amount of three hundred pounds a year are calculated to demoralise teachers. Such till recently unheard-of salaries, say these good people, set teachers above their business, cause them to think themselves "fine ladies and gentlemen," and induce in them a tendency to, metaphorically, turn up their noses at the kind of children they are chiefly called upon to teach—the children of the poorer and poorest classes.

This is what is said; though speaking not merely from a tolerably extensive experience, but also from a comparing of notes with others well qualified to judge, I have a shrewd suspicion that what is really meant is, that under the recent advance in things educational, the position of the teacher has become independent to a degree that is highly objectionable to the vestry-minded class of persons, from whom committees of school-managers are largely drawn. Though virtually standing in the relation of servant to them, the teacher is generally their superior in point of education; and to put him into a position to maintain something like a social equality with them also, they regard as insult and injury to them, and an outrage and danger to society and the social constitution at large.

Let us see how this question of the rate of payment to elementary school teachers really stands.

Taking into account assistant as well as head teachers, and voluntary as well as Board School, the average income

of fully-qualified teachers is still under a hundred pounds per annum. The Board average taken alone would run higher, and it is also the Board which furnishes the extremest cases in point, against which the oppositionists more particularly take up their parable. As the amounts to be spoken of are not of salaries paid to, but of total incomes earned by, teachers, it may, in the first place, be desirable to explain that teachers under the Board are paid partly by fixed salary, and partly by a share of the Government grant on "passes" in the annual examinations of the children by her majesty's inspectors of schools.

This latter payment is to the teacher payment by results, and is measured by the energy and ability he has displayed. Of the larger, and, to the party of the economy-cry, more objectionable incomes, the grant-money makes up a very material proportion. It will be understood from this that the total of the incomes varies more or less in amount each year, and that therefore the figures quoted are round, not exact sums. A few head-teachers make a good three hundred a year out of their schools, a considerable percentage will make two hundred and fifty, and those who earn as high as two hundred may themselves be counted by hundreds. Among those who reach this figure are a number of female teachers, and this is an especially sore point with the advocates of a cutting-down policy. Not very long ago I heard a highly-placed and highly-paid dignitary and pluralist of the Church inform an audience, in the tone of one making a portentous and danger-boding disclosure, that it was actually a fact within his knowledge that a young woman who had formerly been a pupil-teacher in his schools, and was the daughter of working-class people, was under the School Board receiving an income considerably greater than that he paid to his curate. This pointed illustration of what things were coming to "under the Board," was received with cries of shame and other demonstrations of virtuous indignation; and it was quite clear that a large proportion of those present were—for the moment, at any rate—honestly under the impression that the statement they had heard afforded a conclusive argument not for increasing the rate of pay to curates, but decreasing that to teachers. For one wild moment I thought of putting it to the audience as a point for consideration whether, if there

really were "shame" in the contrast that had just been presented to their view, it did not consist rather in a richly-beneficed clergyman declaring that he paid his hardly-worked curate considerably less than two hundred a year, than in the fact that by the successful pursuit of a skilled, laboriously-acquired, and arduous profession, it had become possible for a clever and energetic woman to earn for herself an income of the amount just named. But I am a man of peace, and, conquering my momentary impulse, I remained silent.

The fact is—and this applies more particularly to the argument about unfair competition, in this respect, with voluntary schools—the School Board had no option but to increase the rate of pay to teachers. The increase was a necessary result of the simplest operations of the law of supply and demand. The celerity with which the School Boards of the country carried out the provisions of the Education Acts, not merely gave rise to a demand for teaching power, to an extent previously unprecedented, but brought the demand about suddenly. On the other hand, the qualified teacher is an article that, up to the present time, is only produced under a process of manufacture that extends over at least seven years. It was therefore impossible to augment the supply of the article already in the market, with a degree of rapidity equal to that with which the extra demand arose; and a rise of prices was a necessary consequence. The enhanced rates of payment to teachers, though fair, are certainly not fancy ones. This is a case in which even one of the craft may venture to assert that the labourer is thoroughly worthy of his hire.

As my own position in this respect is a fairly typical one, I will use it by way of illustration.

I served the usual five years as a pupil-teacher, part of it at no payment, and part of it at about errand-boy rate of payment, while I had of course to keep up a much better appearance than an errand-boy is called upon to do. Having, at the end of this term of apprenticeship, come out successfully in the scholarship "Exam.," I was received as a student into a Training College for another period of two years. There I was, of course, boarded, lodged, and educated, free of charge, but incidental expenses cost my parents—who were only of the artisan class—a good twenty pounds a year.

After leaving college I had nine years' experience as a fully qualified and fully responsible master, before taking service under the Board. For four of those years I was an assistant, for the other five a head master; and, averaged over those years, my annual income was ninety pounds. So much as to the cost of qualification; and now as to the work I have to do. I have under my charge three hundred boys, four pupil-teachers, and two assistant-masters. In addition to "taking" my own class, I have to exercise a general supervision over, and frequently examine, all the others. I am responsible for the general discipline of the school, for the collection and accounting for the school-fees, and for all stock and apparatus. I am bound to give at least an hour's teaching per day to the pupil-teachers, and, though not technically, I am in my own interests practically, bound to give another extra hour to late and backward boys. This brings the actual hours of teaching up to seven-and-a-half per day; and, to satisfy either yourself or the Board, it is necessary to teach hard every minute of the time. Not only is my income largely dependent upon examination-results, but my school is one of a group of over a dozen that are all in friendly rivalry, and are all under the same body of managers, who look to comparative as well as positive results. But my teaching—my work proper, my only work, as outsiders not unnaturally suppose—is really only part of my work. I have an amount of book-keeping, report-making, and form-filling to do that would seem absolutely incredible to anyone who failed to take into account the propensity of public departments for "that sort of thing." If a Tite Barnacle presided at the School Board, we teachers could scarcely be more severely afflicted with forms than we are at present. "No forms from the Board to-day," is a remarkable occurrence, to be entered in the log-book in a spirit of jubilation; and one gentleman, who has laboured to prove, from internal evidence afforded by his works, that Shakespeare belonged to our profession, takes as one of his grounds of argument, that none but a Board school-master could or would have penned the exclamation:

Bring me no more reports!

It is head-teachers who earn the incomes that are found fault with as objectionably high, and upon head-teachers falls the

mass of clerical work associated with modern school statistics and school management. We are not, as many suppose, lords of ourselves directly our schools close for the day, nor can the ground be taken that our rate of pay is made relatively high by short hours of labour. The working-day, all told, of the elementary teacher is a long as well as a hard one; and even if it were confined to the hours of actual teaching it would still not be a light one, for there are few forms of non-manual labour more wearing or wearying than that of elementary teaching as carried on under existing competitive conditions.

That we teachers rejoice in our improved position is but natural. Still we have not had our heads turned by prosperity. After all, a man with a family to maintain, and a respectable appearance to keep up, cannot, with an income of even three hundred a year, have much room for the display of purse-pride. And if prosperity has not turned our heads, still less has it hardened our hearts against the children of the poor. If it had, we should indeed be unworthy of our office. Poor little creatures! there are few outside their own class who see so much of the hardships of their lot as we do; and our only feelings towards them are those of pity and admiration—pity for the hard life they have to endure, and admiration for the uncomplaining constancy with which they do endure it. Though verbally it is upon the ground that they have come or are coming to think themselves fine gentlemen that teachers are accused of objecting to poor children, I do not think that it is really—or at any rate deliberately—intended to impute to them any abstract pride or hardness of character.

When those who take up their parable in this wise are put to the question, it will be found that their doctrine is founded upon an idea that poor children are objected to, not simply from being poor, but because, as a consequence of their poverty, they are not likely to prove either pleasant or profitable pupils—are dirty, dull, and troublesome. Now this looks and sounds plausible enough, but experience proves the idea to be quite erroneous. When children of the Arab, or semi-Arab class, are first driven into a school by the exercise of the compulsory powers of the Education Act, they undoubtedly, in a majority of instances, exhibit marked indications of their kin-

ship with the tribe of the Great Unwashed. But a judiciously enforced resort to the well-found lavatories with which every Board-school is supplied, and the children's own quick sense of the unfavourable manner in which they contrast with their class-fellows, soon leads to reform in this respect. In reply to the allegation of dulness, it is sufficient to say that the sharpness, which is universally allowed to characterise children of this class out of school, extends to the work of picking up education in school. As to their being troublesome, I can only say for my own part that I would often like to find them more troublesome than they are. Hard living has a tendency to subdue in them the animal spirits out of which a good deal of the troublesomeness of schoolboys arises; they are easily amenable to discipline; and, what is better, more readily ruled than more fortunately situated children by any little kindness or consideration that may be shown them. Those who speak of the higher-paid among elementary teachers turning a frowning face to the children of the poor really know not what they say—know not how much the charge implies. For us who daily see so much of what they suffer; who know that many a time and oft they come foodless to school, and are at the best but half-fed; see them habitually ill-clothed in cold, and ill-shod in wet weather; and are aware that, while they have to work as other children in school, the young lives of many of them are lives of sheer drudgery out of school; for us, of all men else, to harden our hearts against these little ones, or to wish from any selfish motive to put any bar in the way of their being brought under educational influences, would be "a sin without relief." It is one of the dearest hopes of the profession, that those who are now known as Arab and gutter children may be materially benefited by the education that is being bestowed upon them; may by its means be, in some instances, raised above the condition whereunto they have been born, and have something of "sweetness and light" brought into their lives.

It is not among the children of the Arab class that the teachers of public elementary schools chiefly find their "hard bargains," but among the children of a class a few grades above the Arab class in point of worldly having, and, in their own estimation, immeasurably above them in every other respect—the class whose favourite sin is the pride that apes, not

humility, but gentility. The parents of this, the let-us-be-genteel-or-die class, are given to spoiling their children; and subjecting them to very little discipline themselves, they object to their being subjected to any discipline whatever by others. The children of these parents are the most irregular in their attendance, and the most regular in bringing notes asking that they may be excused from doing their lessons; and they are constantly being moved from school to school, because teachers will not waive in their individual favour, that even-handed justice which is the essential feature of all school discipline. If teachers had any power of selection left in their hands—which they have not—these children, and not the young Arabs, would be the ones they would be disposed to weed out of their schools.

We have our proverbial saying about the importance of the schoolmaster abroad, but the schoolmaster at home is also—only by reason of his function, of course—an important personage, and never before was his position so important in relation to society as it is at the present day. On this ground I trust that my endeavours to show broadly what manner of man he is, and what in the way of qualification and work is required from him “under the Board,” may have something of interest even for the general reader. Though I have illustrated my theme by the method of replying to the objections and theories of those who think that the lines have fallen to us in too pleasant places in these latter days, I do not forget that such critics, though numerous, are a minority. The profession is aware that it may account the bulk of the public as friends and well-wishers, and we have been made to feel in many pleasant ways that there has been accorded to our office a rise, not merely in the rate of money payment, but in general consideration and appreciation.

THAT FRENCH GIRL.

A STORY IN THREE CHAPTERS. CHAPTER II.

THE Capucins, as its name denotes, was once a convent—or, more idiomatically, a friary—not of very ancient date. A pleasant place in the summer-time, with its old-fashioned garden, shaded alleys, and quaint summer-houses, looking over the sparkling river. But there was a great chalk cliff just behind—not one sheer cliff, but a succession of white escarpments with brushwood growing

between—that seemed to give a shut-up, gloomy look to the place. Inside, too, the atmosphere was chilly and vault-like, due to the narrow window-spaces and thick stone walls, except in the room where the Fréville archives were kept. This had been modernised as to light and fittings, and was altogether a warm, sunny nook, with a pleasant look-out on the river and the wooded heights all round from its low French windows.

At one time, I daresay, the Fréville papers had been arranged with due system, but now they were in a complete muddle. The papers were just the kind of highly important rubbish that a man of orderly methodical habits accumulates for the trouble of posterity. Accounts and vouchers, papers as to ancient law-suits, the details as to M. de Fréville's three years' administration of his commune as maire, copies of expired leases, complicated arrangements of farming partnerships. I felt quite bewildered in the maze.

It was a delightful relief to have a long letter from Hornton Street—a joint compilation by the three sisters, with illustrations from Fanny's graphic pencil. Bridget was there in her night-cap, as she alarmed the house the other night, having dreamt a dreadful dream. And grannie, too, in turn had dreamt a gruesome dream. “And Spot, poor dog, has taken to dreaming too, and cried piteously, and kicked even; and Fanny threw a handkerchief over his dear little pate, and is going to wear it round her head when she goes to bed to-night, for they say that is the way to dream the dog's dream; and Fanny thinks that Spot was dreaming about you. The result in our next.” But beneath all this nonsense there was to be seen an under-current of excited feeling. The nerves of the poor girls were strained to the utmost with excitement and expectation. And then, Lady Hazlewood was getting weaker and weaker. The end was coming on that side, it was to be feared. Everything seemed dark in the future, and all the darker for the hopes that had been excited. I began to feel certain now that these hopes would come to nothing. I had set myself an impossible task. Time was running on; I should have to own myself beaten. Only some lucky accident could help me. And such things rarely come to those who have nothing else to look for.

In a kind of dull apathy, I sat looking at the wearisome papers of M. de Fréville

when the *bonne* announced a visit from Madame Pochet, who had come to inform me that she was going to take a short tour. This was the last day of October, and the following day was All Saints, and the eve of the *Fête des Morts*. She proposed to visit the tomb of her husband and other relations in another department, and to return in the course of a few days. If monsieur would consent to remain and take care of the house, she would leave with a tranquil mind. The rooms except those I occupied would be locked up, and the keys hung. Had monsieur noticed the admirable arrangement of the late M. Pochet?

Yes, I had noticed the key-board, a thing like those used at hotels, with a separate hook for each key, and the description of the apartment carefully written over it.

The room had formerly been the bureau of M. Pochet, explained madame, who had inherited the talents of his grandfather, M. de Fréville. Madame Pochet and I, by-the-way, had become excellent friends—a simple-minded old woman of the old-fashioned school, at once jolly and devout—and I felt sorry she was going away; especially as I was to be left alone in this somewhat dreary old friary.

Just as Madame Pochet drove off, the postman came up with a letter from Hornton Street, written in a way that showed me how sharp was the strain of all this doubt and uncertainty upon the girls' minds. Grannie was really ill—they all feared she was sinking—they longed for my presence and support, but would not ask me to leave, when so much depended on my labours. And Lucy, unknown to her sisters, had gone to a spiritual séance with Bridget. They had called for the spirit of Jeanne de la Motte, and there was a manifestation. Three letters were scrawled out, D. S. P. No one knew what they meant, but Bridget was sure they were genuine signs from the unseen world, for these very letters appeared in the scrap of paper that had fallen into Bridget's hands and first started our quest. What did they mean?

To say the truth, I hardly knew myself. What did they mean—anything like R.I.P., or S.P.G., or S.P.Q.R., or any of those initials that persons of a liberal education are supposed to know the meaning of? By a curious coincidence, the meaning was made clear to me that very day. I had set to work anxiously, but almost hope-

lessly, at the De Fréville archives, when I came across a little bundle of papers—pedigrees of various families—in which the initials occurred frequently; and in one place the words they represented were written at full length—*Décodé sans postérité*. Well, that was good news for the Hazlewoods, if true. But why was not the spirit more explicit?

Among those pedigrees, which were in the handwriting of M. de Fréville, I found the family-tree of the De la Mottes. But here, as everywhere else, the trail stopped most provokingly. Everything posted up to the date of the Revolution—even the marriage of M. de la Motte to Jeanne, daughter of Philippe Rankin, Esq. It seemed, too, as if the birth of the French girl we were in search of had been noted, for there was a distinct erasure in the space just below this last entry.

And now I felt that surely I had come to the end of my reel. I had got to the bottom of M. de Fréville's papers, and found out nothing but what I knew before. In a few days I must return, with the news of my failure. What a misfortune for all of us, that ever the question had been raised! Not only had we crippled ourselves financially, but our morale was impaired. The girls had lost all their enthusiasm for the work that was before them; everything now was a dreary grind to them in comparison with the brilliant, enjoyable existence that had seemed within their grasp. Even Bridget was demoralised, and had abandoned her busy, useful contest to go spæing and fortune-telling with witches, warlocks, and spirit-charlatans. I, too, had suffered, as everybody must who espouses an adventurous cause and fails—suffered in the estimation of safe and respectable people, whose opinion was of importance to me, as well as in credit and actual coin. And I found myself feeling almost injured and aggrieved by the Hazlewood family, questioning whether Fanny had not led me on designedly, to get the benefit of my services for nothing.

It was a damp, sombre autumn evening, and everything seemed chilly and comfortless about me. The daily woman came in to ask if I wanted anything more, and to say that she would be obliged to take a holiday on the following day. It was the *Fête des Morts*, and must be passed with her friends, both above and below ground; but she would come in during the morning to arrange monsieur's breakfast. She had locked up all the

rooms, and brought the keys. These she hung up on their appropriate pegs, and then left the house.

As the woman closed the great outside door behind her, its creaking hinges sounded dolorously through the house. The wind howled dolefully along the corridors, doors rattled, windows shook, the boards creaked, as if beneath wandering footsteps. And I did not seem to have energy enough to make the situation more cheerful. The lamp remained unlighted, the fire smouldered away to white ashes; my brain was wearied with its fruitless labours; thought soon gave way to lethargy, and lethargy to sleep.

I awoke with a start and a shiver. It was far on in the night, no doubt, but the room was quite light, as the moon was now shining brilliantly through the tall windows. I had made up my mind for a rush to bed, when I heard the great gate groan on its hinges, and presently a footstep in the corridor.

"It is the charwoman," I said to myself, "the woman Célanie;" trying to ignore the quick beating of my heart. But assuredly her tread had strangely changed, for this was a light, tripping footstep, coming quickly along the paved passage.

The door was opened softly and swiftly, and a figure appeared—a slim and girlish figure—that tripped up to the key-board, and put out a hand—a plump, childish little hand, marble white in the moonlight—that hovered for a moment in uncertainty before it rested on the object of its search. At that instant the appearance turned swiftly round, and looked in my direction with a sweet, mournful air—a look recalling the serene joyless tranquillity of death. And yet I saw with alarm that the face was like Fanny Hazlewood's, as her face might show after the awful change of death. I say alarm, but that was not the predominant feeling; rather an intense sorrow and hopelessness, as the soft sad eyes rested upon me. And then the figure glided quickly away, and I saw it no more.

I sat for some time motionless, penetrated with the idea that this had been some celestial vision, conveying either warning of coming evil, or message of some misfortune just happened. But by degrees, as the first keen impression of the senses wore away, I began to persuade myself that I had been the subject of a hallucination. My mind had been fixed so strongly on one point that, between waking and sleeping, I had called up the semblance of the person

who most engrossed my thoughts. I struck a light, and my fancied notions seemed to take flight. My brain had been over excited, that was all. I had received a serious warning, but not of the supernatural order. I must take care of myself, or something would give way. And then it struck me as curious, that the creature of my heat-oppressed brain should have gone to the keyboard in such a matter-of-fact way. Well, there was the board itself to testify to the baselessness of this part of the vision—the board which had lately been filled with the keys of all the rooms in the house, except the three reserved for my use. Now, if none of these keys were missing, clearly—

All the keys were there excepting those of the rooms I occupied, till I came to the very bottom of the board, and there was certainly one hook without a tenant. What was the label over that? I spelt it out slowly, hardly comprehending at first—"Le Mausolée," The Mausoleum. It was to the tomb then that my visitant, whatever her nature might be, had led the way.

And I had not followed—the mute glance of invitation I had refused. Perhaps by so doing I had lost the last chance of discovering the strangely-guarded secret I hoped to reveal. Anything seemed now possible to me in my shaken, nervous state. Fanny and I were strongly in sympathy upon the same object. Breaking through the impediments of space and matter, she had come to give me aid, and I had rejected it; hence, no doubt, the sorrowful, reproachful glance. Would she come again, and this time to return the key? I would watch and wait, and this time I would not lack the courage to interrogate my strange visitant.

I watched and waited, but nobody came; and before long an irresistible drowsiness came over me. I closed my eyes, and when I opened them the grey light of morning was shining in at the windows, and a pale rosy reflection in the river showed that the sun was rising. Wearied and stiff, and somewhat ashamed of my feelings of the night before, I crawled off to bed, and slept till nearly noon.

The first thing I did on rising was to go to the keyboard, and satisfy myself that I had not been dreaming about the mausoleum and the key. There was the label all right, but no key. It was a puzzling affair certainly, and I felt an eager desire to find out this mausoleum. But I

could find no one to tell me where to find it. I searched the grounds without success. Someone suggested to me that perhaps there was a mausoleum in the cemetery, and there I went. But I found no mausoleum: there was nothing in the way of a stately monument of any kind. Again there was the old cemetery, almost overgrown with rank vegetation, with here a bust, and there a little classic temple, all covered with green mould, looking strangely deserted and forlorn. There had been no interments here for fifty years, and naturally the dead were all forgotten; but there was nothing there in the nature of a mausoleum.

I went back to the Capucins, feeling strangely dejected and out of spirits, and began once more to search the grounds. At last, in the remotest corner, hidden by some shrubs, I found a small wicket-gate that opened upon a rather precipitous slope, a débris of chalk rubble from the cliff above. And yet there were the remains of a gravel path that ended here abruptly. By the gate the gravel had sunk a little, so that the rain of the night before had made a kind of puddle there, and in the soft mud there was the distinct impress of a foot, just such a small and well-shaped foot as Fanny's. Someone had recently passed this way, and I stepped over the gate and followed the direction of the footmark. Once across the sliding "talus" I found a narrow footpath, leading along a ledge in the cliff. It widened presently, and I came to a narrow avenue of fir-trees, the ground beneath carpeted thickly with their spines. Presently there opened out a little green plateau, where the sun shone in with delicious warmth. Just in front was a brick building ornamented with shallow pilasters, and a cross of ornamental ironwork over the gable; wooden gates of open palisades gave a glimpse into a darkly-shadowed interior. The gates were locked but the wood-work was soft and rotten; a vigorous push dislodged the bolt, and I entered; within were two flat gravestones, and at the farther end a marble bust, that gleamed out strangely in the half-light. Without doubt I had found the mausoleum.

The place looked damp and deserted, yet there were signs that some attempt had been recently made to put it in order. The dead leaves that had drifted in had been carefully swept into a corner, and a wreath of immortelles, black and rotten with age, had been carefully placed against

the wall beneath the bust. The inscriptions on the gravestones were illegible from the mossy growth upon them; with a knife I began to clean the figures that represented the dates. "Le 2 Novembre, 1786." It was the date of the French girl's birth; eagerly I cleared out the rest of the inscription.

"Ici repose Jeanne de la Motte Davigny, née à St. Arnoult le 2 Novembre, 1786; décédée le 12 Janvier, 1836."

I had found it! There was no doubt in my mind; the correspondence of name and date were too remarkable for a mere coincidence, and everything seemed to show that in this secluded spot some childless couple, not over friendly with the church, perhaps, had chosen to be laid. Everything now was plain sailing; I had got the right end of the clue, and could hardly fail of complete success.

My first impulse was to communicate the good news to the Hazlewoods. I left the mausoleum, and went back to the house to write my letter. I wrote in the best of spirits. They were not to be too confident, but still the worst part of the task was over. I had little doubt but that in a few weeks all would be settled one way or the other, and I had great hopes in a way favourable to them; and then followed certain tender passages addressed to Fanny.

I did not close the letters however; while daylight remained I would return to the mausoleum, and make sure that I had got the dates all right. Approaching quickly and softly, my footsteps muffled by the thick carpet of dead leaves, I was astonished to find someone already there; a slight girlish figure, dressed in deep black, set off by wreaths of bright immortelles that she carried on her arm.

With a handkerchief she was wiping away the dust and leaves from a third gravestone which had escaped my notice before. Then she deposited one of her wreaths upon the stone and clasped her hands before her—soft white hands, plump and dimpled like a child's. "Ma mère!" she whispered, in a whisper low, but audible in the surrounding stillness.

A movement on my part alarmed her and she looked up with a start, a faint flash of surprise on her pale cheeks. A deadly kind of vertigo came over me as I recognised a strange likeness to Fanny in the stranger. Here was my mysterious visitant of the previous night. And then the truth flashed upon me:

this was the French girl foreshadowed all the time! I took off my hat and advanced.

"Mademoiselle, is it possible that you are a descendant of Madame de la Motte?"

Ah yes, it was so; she was the granddaughter of Jeanne de la Motte, the girl so strangely lost sight of in Paris. She was full of wonder that I should know anything about her family; she was going back to Cauville now, and as I walked with her on the way she told me the family history. Her name was Jeanne, too, by-the-way.

The first Jeanne, her grandmother, left destitute in the streets of Paris, had wandered homeless for awhile, and then had been picked up by some vagabonds, who, finding that she had a fine voice and engaging air, sent her out into the streets to sing. A certain musician, M. Davigny, heard her and was struck by her voice. He bought her from her proprietors, and intended to educate her for the stage—in the end, he married her. M. Davigny became the director of the Grand Opera, under the first Napoleon; and in the time of his prosperity he took steps to establish the identity of his wife; but although this was acknowledged by those who formerly knew the De la Mottes, the connections of the family, rigid and implacable royalists, refused to associate with one who had married an artist and a functionary of the Empire. In spite of that, however, to please his wife, M. Davigny purchased this property of the Capucins, the monks having been turned adrift years before, and eventually came to live there when, at the restoration of the monarchy, affairs in Paris no longer went to his liking. There was one daughter who married an artist, clever but unfortunate, and the present Jeanne was the sole issue of the union.

It was all clear enough, painfully clear to me at that moment. I added a dismal postscript to my letter to the Hazlewoods. "All was lost," I wrote, "the hope we had cherished had vanished. A French girl stood in the way of everything."

ALL OR NOTHING.

BY MRS. CASHEL HOBY,

AUTHOR OF "A HOUSE OF CARDS," "GRIFFITH'S DOUBT,"
&c. &c.

CHAPTER XX. AMABEL'S FOLLY.

THE CHANTRY was one of those places which seem to have been named on the principle that regulates the appellations of Gardens and Groves in crowded parts of

London, applying them to dreary regions where no flower ever bloomed, and stony-hearted spaces where no tree ever cast the shadow of flickering leaves on the dull grey flags. There was not even a tradition to justify the name; no fragment of an ancient arch, or mutilated bit of carving, had connected the place with the medieval fame of the great Abbey whose ruins were the boast of the county. It lay quite apart from all the historic associations of the neighbourhood, and was denounced by Miss Ainslie as all the more desperately uninteresting because the name led one to expect something.

To unimaginative minds, with a taste for the solid and the comfortable, The Chantry might, however, have seemed a satisfactory residence. The house was a solid square stone edifice, with good-sized rooms, well shaped and well lighted, and the grounds, though small in extent and perfectly flat, were prettily planted. Mr. Ainslie's hobby, the farm, would have commenced at the hall-door, if he had had his way; as he had not, the ornamental portion of the place was of sufficient extent to prevent the useful portion's being obtrusive. A well-kept road at the back of the shrubberies amid which the house stood divided them from the farm; so that, as Miss Ainslie consoled herself by reflecting, her papa's pets were neither seen, heard, nor smelt, on the home premises. The prevailing characteristic of The Chantry was trimness. The interior of the house accorded with its exterior physiognomy; it was comfortable and commonplace; and the war that Miss Ainslie had declared against the furniture—the whole had been purchased from the former proprietors—was unprovoked, except as a matter of taste. What was the good, Miss Ainslie contended, of talking about things being very substantial, and very dear, tailor, if they were simply detestable, and too vulgar for endurance? The more substantial the things were, the longer they would last; and the dearer they were, the more shame for the stupid man who had taken them "at a valuation;" just as if, so long as there were tables and chairs, curtains and carpets enough in the house, it did not matter in the least about the shapes of the former or the colours of the latter!

Mr. Ainslie was better satisfied with The Chantry. The novelty of his leisure had not yet worn off; and though he was, as Amabel said, always wanting somebody to talk India to, he derived a fair proportion of the pleasure he had anticipated

from his farm and his pigs. The dry, chippy, brown, dejected little man was better content with his lot than are most human beings, especially when they have had any power of choice given them; and even the vivacity and restlessness of his pretty daughter—the kind of thing so observable in her, which, for want of a better word, may be called modernness—troubled him little. He complained of it, but she was right enough when she said that he liked it on the whole.

Amabel Ainslie had been sent home from India even unusually early, and she had not seen her parents in the interval between her being sent “home,” and her being sent “out.” She knew a little of them—there was something to be learned from their letters—but they knew nothing of her, there was nothing to be learned from hers; and if Mrs. Ainslie had been obliged to describe her feelings after Amabel’s return to Bombay, she could have done so most truthfully by saying that she felt as if Amabel were a strange young lady, on a visit of undefined duration. It is a feature of modern days, that mother and daughters, father and sons, brothers and sisters, dwellers together, do not “understand” each other. The fault is chiefly with the young ones; they like to be, or to believe themselves, incompris; a state of things which does not necessarily imply romantic tenderness, but is as much affected by the bouncing belle as by the young lady of a more poetic order. Amabel was touched by this foolish affectation, and in danger of being spoilt by it. Mrs. Ainslie, who had never possessed much strength of character, took the fullest advantage of her invalidism to leave the little she had in abeyance, and “gave up Amabel,” as she told Mr. Ainslie, when her daughter’s high spirits and wilfulness became oppressive to her. On the other hand, Amabel would complain to her father, and to Mrs. Cathcart—who was a little shocked at first, but afterwards came to “understand” the girl better—that she “could not manage mamma.”

The latter task was not so easy as it might have appeared. Mrs. Ainslie had a good deal of quiet obstinacy in her disposition, and she had by degrees sunk into a state of indifference to most things except her own comforts, for which a long residence in India, with very few associates of her own race and class, and also her confirmed ill-health, offered at least reasonable excuse. In truth, therefore, Amabel

Ainslie had but little guidance and counsel in her life, and was more affected by the peculiarities of her parents respectively, than aided by their judgment or controlled by their authority. She had felt some misgivings about her unknown cousin, Mrs. Cathcart, on whom she knew she must depend for a good deal of such pleasantness as she might hope to get into her life at The Chantry; her father’s notions about his niece had been of the vaguest kind, and Mrs. Cathcart had not taken the trouble of making acquaintance with Amabel in her long spell of boarding-school life. These misgivings had given way very rapidly before the hearty kindness of Mrs. Cathcart, and Amabel herself had inspired the vicar’s wife with sincere interest and affection, as well as with some anxiety. There are lives so hedged about with the defences of a commonplace and even prosperity, so featureless and smooth, that one wonders how change, trouble, calamity of any kind is to get at them, to transform them out of all likeness to their former selves. Such a life was Amabel Ainslie’s. If it should ever be knocked out of its fair proportions and simple dignities, decencies and delights, “the bolt” would have to come “from the blue.” Mrs. Cathcart was not a fauciful person; it was something in the girl herself that made her anxious; an easily produced depression, and especially, under all her high spirits, a dash of superstition that vexed her cousin most. It was such an odd contradiction to the essential modernness of Amabel’s notions and habits; it matched so ill with her rather daring independence, and her active practical ways; and then, it was so foolish! Mrs. Cathcart hated the mere notion that Amabel might gain a character for “oddness,” and she had been thinking about it, just before Mr. Cathcart set out to pay his first visit to Bevis, on that day when Amabel had come over from The Chantry to see her, unexpectedly.

“I do believe she is a fatalist,” Mrs. Cathcart had said to her husband, who was not prepared either to dispute her view, or to deal with the case from a pastoral standpoint; “she says the oddest things about people, and she declares that she has always been right in what she calls her fortune-telling.”

“Don’t let her prophesy about yourself, my dear,” said the vicar, with a smile of easy superiority over every kind of weakness of the imagination; “for I am by no means sure that you would not be silly enough to be haunted by any nonsense

she might talk to you. I suppose it is a lot of rubbish she picked up in India."

Mrs. Cathcart wisely said no more; her pretty cousin would not be likely to get much countenance or help from the vicar. But on a day or two later her mind turned in a direction which it had been apt to take when assailed by perplexities, not, indeed, of this kind, but concerning what she called her "clergywoman's" affairs.

"What a friend to her Janet would be!" so ran Mrs. Cathcart's meditations. "I cannot imagine any better fortune for her, except, indeed, a husband in all respects suitable, than Janet for a friend. I have never yet tried to make up a young-lady friendship, and I should think it is rather more difficult than making up a match. Oh my dear Janet, how I do wish you had not gone away from Bevis!"

The latter sentence might almost be said to be a refrain of Mrs. Cathcart's thoughts, so often did they shape themselves into it. In the present instance she was reminded that wishing Miss Monroe had never gone away from Bevis was tantamount to wishing Captain Dunstan had never come thither, by seeing that gentleman pass the window of the vicar's library. Presently he was announced, and Mrs. Cathcart learned from him all that had occurred on the previous day at Bury House, of which only a vague rumour had as yet reached the vicarage.

She was very sorry for Sir Wilfrid, who had impressed her favourably on the occasion of his only visit to the vicarage. He could not, indeed, compete with his friend in either person or manner, to Mrs. Cathcart's mind. Captain Dunstan was so very good-looking, so singularly interesting; and Sir Wilfrid was not remarkably handsome, or remarkably interesting; he was merely very "nice," according to that delightfully-handly generalisation of which women make so much use. Was there anything she could do, any way in which she could help? Then she found that Dunstan had come to talk to her not only of Sir Wilfrid, but of Miss Monroe, and she threw into her manner just the least tinge of coldness. Mrs. Cathcart was decidedly of opinion that Captain Dunstan had behaved with great negligence towards Miss Monroe.

The tinge of coldness speedily disappeared, however, when Captain Dunstan spoke of Janet's readiness, helpfulness, and calmness, in the midst of the distress and confusion Sir Wilfrid's accident had caused, with admiration and eagerness

which she herself could hardly have surpassed.

"It will be ever so long before he can be brought back to Bevis," said Dunstan, in conclusion; "I shall see him every day, and when he begins to get well, I daresay he won't find it dull with Miss Carmichael and Miss Monroe."

Mrs. Cathcart had never heard of Miss Carmichael, but she was quite sure there could be no dulness where the society of Miss Monroe might be obtained. And then she went on to say that she should see Janet very soon. Dunstan cut a visit which he felt had taken a satisfactory turn, rather short, as he was anxious to get back to Bury House, and he had hardly left Mrs. Cathcart when Amabel arrived, "rattling" her ponies along in the manner which Sir Wilfrid had objected to.

Mrs. Cathcart told her the news, and, to her great astonishment, Amabel turned extremely pale, and sat down helplessly on hearing it.

"Never mind me," she said, in reply to Mrs. Cathcart's look of surprise, "I am only a greater fool than usual!"

"What in the world do you mean?"

"Just what I say; that I am only a greater fool than usual—according to your notions, I mean. I saw Sir Wilfrid Esdaile yesterday for the first time, and I am sincerely glad—because I think I should like him very much, if I saw more of him, to hear to-day what has happened to him! Don't be angry with me, and pray, pray don't tell the vicar—but I saw it—I really did—I solemnly assure you I did—in his face!"

"Saw what in his face, Amabel? That he was to be thrown from his horse and break a rib and his collar-bone? How can you be so absurd?"

"No, no, not quite that. But that there was misfortune before him; and now it has come, or rather he has come up with it upon the road, and it is only this, only a broken bone or two, a little illness—nothing!"

She spoke excitedly, and Mrs. Cathcart could only look the vexation she felt.

"I know you never will believe me," Amabel went on; "but I can't help it, there is something that puts these things into my head, and I certainly can't help that. I do know the doomed look in people's faces, and the lucky look, like Captain Dunstan's, for all his melancholy eyes and fine smile, and I did see it in Sir Wilfrid Esdaile's face."

"And now he has—what is it you witch

people call it?—dree'd his weird, I suppose," said Mrs. Cathcart smiling, "and there's nothing more for him to fear."

"I will tell you that when I see him again," replied Amabel, with perfect seriousness. "It is very odd that I have felt Sir Wilfrid Esdaile wasn't lucky, ever since I first heard his name mentioned. Captain Dunstan said I made a bad shot there, but you see I did not."

"Really, Amabel, you are excessively provoking. Anyone would think you were a prophet, and pleased with the result of your predictions. Pray don't be sibylline any more, but come and look at what Sir Wilfrid Esdaile brought for you from Ceylon. Captain Dunstan asked me to take charge of the box, as there will be no going to The Chantry for a little while at least."

Amabel pounced on the box with the eagerness of a child, and was speedily absorbed in tortoiseshell and filigree, to the oblivion of everything else.

Mrs. Cathcart did not relinquish, though she was obliged to defer, her intention of transacting a friendship between Amabel Ainslie and Janet Monroe, and accordingly she took her pretty young cousin with her to Bury House after she was informed that visitors could be admitted.

They found Captain Dunstan at Bury House; he was in fact walking under the almost bare branches of the elm-trees with Miss Monroe. The ladies left their carriage at the gate; Dunstan pointed out to them the scene of the accident, and then Amabel walked on with him towards the house, leaving Mrs. Cathcart to follow with Janet, and "talk parish," as Amabel said. In fact they talked of her.

Sir Wilfrid was getting on so well, that there was no reason why the little party gathered together at Bury House on that afternoon should not be a cheerful one. The old ladies were charmed with their visitors. Mrs. Cathcart regretted that she had not made their acquaintance sooner; and Amabel thought how easy it would be to manage her mamma if she were like those dear old ladies, and wondered whether Miss Carmichael's lover who was in Ceylon was "nice." In Miss Carmichael herself Amabel was not vividly interested, though she did study her with what she called her "seeing" intention, and set her down as one of the lucky. Miss Carmichael would be all right, she would marry the Scotchman; he would make the coffee plantation pay, and all would be well. With Mrs. Cathcart's eye

upon her, as they all sat round a solidly spread tea-table, Amabel was restrained from some of her fancies, and at the same time incited to try a little more of the flirtation with Captain Dunstan that had not succeeded on board ship. So she was very bright and amusing; and Sir Wilfrid, who lay on his couch, and had his tea on a little table, was very well indeed, all things considered, and privately rather sorry that his condition of privilege was drawing to a close; he was also charmed with Miss Ainslie, and forgave her about the ponies.

But the central object of Amabel's observation was Janet Monroe. She looked at her when she moved, and listened to her when she spoke, with all the admiration which Mrs. Cathcart could have wished her to feel. She said to herself many times that she had never seen anyone like her, so gravely graceful, so simply gracious; but she felt at the same time an unaccountable dread of her. Was this one of her superstitions, she wondered, and would it go away, and leave her mind clear towards the sweet and lovely young woman, in praise of whom Mrs. Cathcart had not said nearly enough? What was this horrid sort of power—or rather weakness, for it brought no help with it—that she had of foreknowing, though only in the vaguest instinctive way, when harm was coming to her? It was not fancy; she had felt it as a little child: towards a nursemaid at first sight, and the woman had ill-treated her; towards a dog, and he had long afterwards bitten her; towards a schoolfellow in her school-days, and she had done her an unprovoked wrong. But the strange instinctive dread had never come to her so strongly as it came while she sat opposite to Janet Monroe at the Misses Sandilands' tea-table.

"What harm can she do me, or I her?" Amabel asked herself, almost in the moment of the impression that stole over her. "For this time the feeling is two-sided, and I am afraid of myself as well as of her. Sweet, lovely, benignant creature! it is wicked to let any such thought into my mind, and I will not. Mrs. Cathcart is right, this is mere superstition, and I will conquer it."

"And now, tell me, what do you think of Janet Monroe?" Mrs. Cathcart asked Amabel, when they were on their way home.

"I think she is quite lovely, and absolutely unlike anyone I have ever seen. I think she is too good and too lofty to be the friend of a—what shall I say—a mere

bubble and bauble of a creature like me—and also too good and too lofty to be——”

Here Amabel paused in her speech and touched up the ponies.

“To be—yes?”

“Never mind, I was going to be impatient, and I won’t. How she walks! How she talks! And how strange her life has been! To think that I have been to the other side of the world and back, and that Janet Monroe has never seen a play or heard an opera in her life, and yet I’m sure there’s nothing she could not do. Oh dear!” And she turned a comical face to her companion. “How nice it would be to have her to talk to papa about farming and ‘cutcherry,’ and to manage mamma!”

“I see you appreciate her; but why should you think you could not make a friend of her, Amabel?”

“Because she ‘couldna be fashed’ with me, as the awful example in the Scotch story-book says.”

“You are quite wrong, and, as usual, perverse.”

“Very well, we shall see.”

Miss Ainslie’s ponies soon became well acquainted with the road to Bury House; for this first visit was succeeded by many more, and Mrs. Cathcart had no need to make any effort to bring her friend and her cousin together. A more promising young-lady friendship could not have been desired than that which formed itself between the two, who were so very different. On Amabel’s part it was deeply enthusiastic, so generous that it extended to all Janet’s objects of predilection—the rooks, the fowls, the flowers, the unamiable Spitz, the gardener’s children, the kitten, and Julia Carmichael—and so disinterested that it had no jealousy in it. She knew her place in Janet’s heart, and she was satisfied with it. Never had Amabel Ainslie known such happy days as those during which Sir Wilfrid Esdaile was rapidly getting well at Bury House; and she was constantly coming and going from thence to The Chantry, whither she carried glowing accounts of Janet. Mr. Ainslie made several visits to the old and young ladies, and to Sir Wilfrid, and duly carried polite messages from Mrs. Ainslie, who was unequal to the fatigue of visiting.

Thus the time passed, and the end of this pleasant and harmless season was drawing near. Amabel was in high spirits at her own

prospects, for Janet was to go on a visit to The Chantry after a little while, when Julia should have returned to Hunsford, and Sir Wilfrid to Bevis. Amabel had not forgotten her impression that Captain Dunstan had been defended by a prior attachment against her attempts at captivating him. She saw a good deal of him, and she became entirely convinced of its truth. But now she believed that she had discovered the object of that attachment; and that, just for once in this world of fragments, failures, and contrarieties, everything—the everything for which she cared just then—was going to be all right. Amabel, with all her impulsiveness and unruliness, had a great deal of real delicacy of mind, and she carefully abstained from a question or a hint which might possibly have given pain to Janet. Perhaps her perceptions would not have been so keen, or her tact so nice, but for the voiceless teaching of something in her own heart that had never before stirred it. However that may have been, Amabel Ainslie was very happy; her cousin’s device for her benefit had succeeded to perfection, and if it had produced consequences only to be made evident in the future, such was a common occurrence in human affairs.

“And just to think,” said Amabel to herself, on the day when Janet promised to go on a visit to The Chantry—“just to think I had that queer shudder when I saw her first, and felt that it would either be my fate to harm her, or her fate to harm me! What nonsense! It was the very best day for me I have ever yet seen. All that was my folly, and I am done with it forever.”

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